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# Empowering Our Ministry: Christ as Spirit-Empowered King

**Luke 17:20-21**

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**This morning I would like to highlight the third element in the threefold ministry of Jesus. First, we shared how Christ was a Spirit-empowered prophet. Then how He was a Spirit-empowered priest. Now, how Christ was a Spirit-empowered king, the person to whom was entrusted the governance and protection of the community of faith.**

**You'll remember that both prophet and priest stood between God and humankind. The prophet represented God to the people, and the priest represented the people to God. What the king does is govern and rule. Jesus came not only to announce the coming of the kingdom, but also to establish the kingdom. And this is the problem because most don't see the establishment of God's kingdom.**

**We all appreciate the great words from the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." We are stirred by these words. They contain the power of God, the kairos moment when we begin to think in God-time instead of chronological-time, that point when the long-awaited work of the messiah begins. The kingdom of God is at hand. It's arrived! I'm here, says Jesus, whom we know to be the messiah.**

**But what does it mean that Jesus has established His kingdom? Where is it? Where is the evidence of its existence? These are the questions posed by the Pharisees in Luke 17.**

**The Greek translation of 17:21 allows for Jesus' to be saying either that the 'kingdom of God' is within you or, that the 'kingdom of God' is in the midst of you.**

**Jesus is saying these words, most likely, as He stands among a group of people. He is most likely saying to them that He, Himself, is the kingdom of God, standing, as it were, in the midst of them. He is the king and where the king is, there is the kingdom. Yet, the other reading is also correct, for now that Jesus has ascended to heaven and sent the Holy Spirit, who is now Emmanuel (God with us), and the Holy Spirit resides within a believer, it's also correct to say that the kingdom of God, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, is within you.**

**Who are the subjects of this king? All those who are born of water, and the Spirit, and those who do the will of the Father.**

**So, Jesus is saying that the kingdom of God has come, that it exists wherever He, the king, walks, and then it exists wherever His people, with the indwelling Holy Spirit, also walk. We know that this kingdom of God is not of this world (John 18:36), so**

**we know not to look for it in cities of power with monuments and bureaucracies. But we, His people, are often blinded concerning His kingdom precisely because we don't see the working of the power of His government. We don't think highly of His kingdom (of which we are a part), because we don't experience a tremor of excitement as we contemplate Jesus' 'state of the union' address, because we don't see any pageantry, because we don't see any form of this kingdom.**

**This is, incidentally, why many churches want to build big buildings, and extend church services to cover all of life. Such churches want to imitate the presence and power of government, the visible and visceral kingdom that both serves as an odd source of pride and uncomfortably intrudes into our private lives with the need for building permits and taxes. Because the kingdom of this world is so visible, we assume all kingdoms (to be legitimate) must be equally visible, and so we are co-opted to take a slice of the power of government, in return for soft pedaling the truth of the Gospel.**

**Obviously, to be a king, there must be given authority and power. This came to Jesus at the time the Holy Spirit fell upon Him at His baptism. From that day hence, He received power to fulfill the office of king. While on earth, however, His power was not full and complete, because His task was incomplete. After the resurrection and ascension, Jesus took His place of glory at the right hand of the Father.**

**How did Jesus show His authority and power while on earth? There were three ways:**

**Jesus as king called men and women to obey and follow Him Jesus as king routed the kingdom of Satan Jesus as king had power over nature**

**And in each of these three demonstrations of His kingly authority and power, I believe Jesus calls us to follow Him in ministry.**

**Clearly, the entire ministry of Jesus was one long evangelistic crusade. He had come to preach the gospel and call people to repentance. His miracles and healing existed to demonstrate the presence of the kingdom of God, but mostly these demonstrations served to illustrate the truth of the Gospel, and to persuade women and men to accept the Good News, to make it their own, by confessing Jesus as the Christ of God. And this is our job as well. Even if you discover that your spiritual gift is mercy, or service, or administration, you are still given the authority and power to proclaim the Good News of salvation to someone whom the Lord will bring into your orbit. I say this clearly: God expects every one of us to articulate the message of salvation at some point in our lives. So, get off your duff, and learn and understand and memorize the basic plan of salvation. You get your part down. Don't worry, God will bring the right person right to you for the conversation. Our part is to be 'not ashamed of the Gospel' and be ready.**

**If you need a refresher on the Gospel message, I've had reprinted a three sermon series which I gave in April, 1996, into one packet, and these packets are available in the Narthex this morning. Or read the Four Spiritual Laws from Campus Crusade. Or get a small book on evangelism from the local Christian bookstore. But get to it! You have been given authority and power to bring the Gospel to someone, and as soon as you understand the Gospel, God will bring that someone to you!**

**The second way in which Jesus exercised His authority and power was the way He routed the kingdom of Satan. Everywhere He went, Jesus cast out demons, setting free those oppressed by the devil. Often, when Jesus preached, evil spirits would start to manifest themselves. How are we to understand this strange phenomenon? Well, when Jesus went into an area to preach,**

**He was the vanguard of the kingdom of God. Thus there was a clash between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God. The result was that demons were driven out of hiding, lost their hold on people, and were overcome by the kingdom of God.**

**As king, Jesus came not only to reconcile women and men to God, but also to bring healing. Part of this healing is the notion that Jesus comes as warrior, defeating the power of Satan who has held the world captive. And I believe this is to be an important component of our overall ministry as well, because Jesus gave this authority and power to His disciples.**

**One Presbyterian pastor writes about his preaching at a church in New Zealand. The sanctuary was packed with young people. During the service a young man started to thrash around and grimace horribly. As the pastor approached him and started to pray, the face of the young man contorted with rage and his hands twisted and went for the pastor's throat, seeking to strangle. He was restrained by others. The pastor began to command the spirits to leave. An intense struggle followed while the young man writhed on the floor, and the pastor called everyone present to stop gawking and start praying. As they all prayed for deliverance, they could feel the power and presence of God filling the place and the demonic power giving way. Finally, in the name of Jesus, the pastor commanded the spirits to leave. They gave a final shriek. The young man retched violently and the spirits left.**

**Soon the young man was in his right mind. In great joy he went jumping around the church (yes, a Presbyterian church) shouting that he was set free. He later came to the pastor to explain that, as the pastor first approached, he lunged for his throat because as the evil spirit manifested itself, he was overcome with a murderous hatred of Jesus Christ and of the pastor.**

**Needless to say, this manifestation of the power of God over Satan had a significant effect on most of the young people in the sanctuary. All glorified Jesus that day with fervency, and many, including the once-demonized man, were brought to a new level of commitment of Jesus Christ. And this assertion of the Jesus' kingship through casting out demons from afflicted individuals is not just an isolated act of compassion, but the visible result of battles in the spiritual realm, as the kingdom of Jesus routs the kingdom of Satan, through us in this church.**

**The third way in which Jesus exercised His authority and power was over the natural order. Luke 8 speaks of how Jesus commanded the wind and the waves. We also see Jesus' power over nature when He performed miracles like feeding the five thousand or turning water into wine. Raising Lazarus and the widow's son from the dead belong to His kingly work. These miracles demonstrate that in Jesus resides the abundant creative power of God; life abundant in all its creative exuberance!**

**We might pray over a brother or sister who has cancer, and experience the power of God expressed through physical healing. Or we might have an experience like a group did on a mission trip to Taiwan in 1987. These folk had worked with the Taiwanese and had planned an open air, evangelistic crusade which was expected to draw large crowds. Yet, the day of the event was threatened with cancellation because of a typhoon headed in their direction.**

**That afternoon, as the winds built to gale force, the ministry team struggled to the top of a hill, where they prayed in the Spirit, asking God to intervene so the crusade could go forward and the Gospel of Jesus be proclaimed. Then came the Holy Spirit's command - Now rebuke the winds just as Jesus did in the boat.**

**The leader of the group, a carpenter from Portland, Oregon, stood into the wind and, in the name of Jesus, commanded the typhoon to turn away. As he did so (he told the team later), he sensed something strange, as if a malignant force that was more than wind lashed out at him. He felt a shot of terror go through him as he realized he was in a face-to-face confrontation with demonic power. Boldly he continued to rebuke the winds in the name of Jesus Christ. Several hours after this power encounter, the winds subsided and the typhoon turned out to sea, and the crusade went on as planned and provided an occasion for the powerful preaching of the Gospel with signs and wonders that brought many to salvation. Once again, Jesus the king worked through Spirit-empowered Christians to advance His kingdom.**

**Jesus' ministry was to be prophet, priest and king. And He would have us join with Him in this ministry. That's the reason He founded the church, that's the reason why the Holy Spirit has come to dwell within us, and the reason why the Holy Spirit wishes to baptize us with power. It's so we can get out of the comfortable pews in which we have been raised, and work as anointed subject of the king, doing the work of the king, for the kingdom. It's not about big buildings and impressing the masses. It's about taking God seriously and trusting in the power of God.**

**Are you willing? Are you willing to call men and women to follow Him? Are you willing to become involved in a ministry that delivers people from demonic possession? Are you willing to pray for specific healing and to pray that winds subside? That's what I'm talking about, that's where I'm going. If you want to join in this kind of kingdom work, you'd better get ready and become prepared.**

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